

VZCZCXRO9313
OO RUEHDBU
DE RUEHBUL #3608/01 2260605
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 140605Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1912
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2745
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 2895
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6225
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 1574

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 KABUL 003608

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, SA/PB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: WALKOUT FROM AFGHAN PARLIAMENT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RONALD NEUMANN BY REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Begin summary: A group estimated at 80 MPs walked out of Parliament on 12 August, ostensibly to protest what they view as discriminatory ethnic policy by the Karzai administration. Led by the Uzbek MPs, the protesters included representatives from at least nine provinces. They have stated that they will not return to participate in the Parliament sessions until their concerns are met. As of COB on 13 August, the walkout has not been resolved despite ongoing discussions between the MPs and Parliament leadership. We are urging a return to Parliament. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) On Saturday, 12 August a large group (estimated at 80) of MPs staged a walk out from the Parliament. While most of the participants were Uzbek, Turkoman, and Aimaq members, MPs from other ethnic groups have joined their protest. Poloff was asked to meet with the group on Friday, 11 August (a holiday in Afghanistan) prior to the walkout to hear their concerns, and accompanied the Ambassador to a longer session on 12 August following the walkout. The Friday session was attended by members of the Afghan Cabinet (including Minister of Haj Naimatullah Shahrani, Minister of Martyrs and Social Affairs Noor Mohammed Qarqeen, and Minister of Higher Education Mohammad Azam Dadfar), but the lengthier Saturday session was limited to MPs. The more than 20 MPs at the Ambassador's meeting included representatives from Kabul, Faryab, Kunduz, Sari Pol, Takhar, Samangan, Jouzjan, Kunduz, Baghlan and Balkh Provinces. Both meetings were chaired by Wolessi Jirga First Secretary (MP from Takhar) Mohammad Rahman Aughli.

13. (C) At the 12 August session, Aughli began by

noting that the MPs would normally not be discussing such internal Afghan affairs with a foreign ambassador, but the role of the USA had been a very positive one in helping Afghanistan to stand up, and Afghanistan still needed American and international assistance. He noted that the walkout from Parliament had stemmed from the MPs long-standing disappointment over what they believed was a policy of ethnic discrimination and prevention of political participation by the Karzai administration. The result of the administration's policy had been to create a general feeling of distrust towards the government, and because of this, the insecurity in the south and southeast of Afghanistan had a good chance of spreading to the north and the west. Once started, this would lead to chaos in the country. Aughli claimed that despite the fact that Aimaks, Turkomans and Uzbeks represented millions of people in Afghanistan, there were almost no senior officials from these ethnic groups. This was having a strong impact on the members of those ethnic communities, who felt they were being treated as second class citizens.

¶4. (C) According to Aughli, the Karzai administration's policies had to change. Its performance, despite the assistance given by so many countries, had been very weak, to the point where even the streets of Kabul were unsafe. Incompetent and weak people should not be assigned to office, and assignment policies had to be more transparent. Karzai himself had to be told that if he could not fulfill promises, he should not make them, because it only led

KABUL 00003608 002 OF 005

to more distrust.

¶5. (C) Two other MPs spoke and repeated the general tenor of Aughli's comments, but added that Karzai had lost popular support even among his own ethnic group, the Pashtuns. A Tajik MP from Kabul (and former Mayor of Kabul) claimed that he had spoken to thousands of younger Afghans in Kabul, and could find no one who supported the government ministers. This reflected the gap felt by the younger Kabulis towards the Parliament and government.

¶6. (C) At the conclusion of their presentation, the MPs handed over a copy of the letter they had sent to the Speaker of the Parliament outlining their concerns and the reason for their walkout. (Text in para 11).

¶7. (C) Replying to the MPs' lengthy presentation, the Ambassador stated that he had been very favorably impressed by the Parliament since its inception, and that the MPs had shown themselves to be very responsible. In his opinion, walking out of the Parliament was an important gesture, but now that it had been made, staying out too long would be a mistake. He noted that if the MPs remained out of the proceedings, final decisions on critical subjects would be made by just a few people and not by the Parliament as a whole. This would result in an overall weakening of the Parliament as an institution. The position taken by the MPs on governance and selection of top officials was a serious and important one, but it was also a longstanding issue in Afghanistan. Balancing the demands of ethnic minorities had been addressed repeatedly in Afghan history, and never successfully. No one foreigner, and no foreign government, could create an answer for the Afghans. It was a long term, difficult issue, and because it was so important, the solution could only be found by the Afghans themselves through discussion within the Parliament.

¶8. (C) The Attorney General - Although they disclaimed

it as a major factor in their decision to walk out of Parliament, there is reason to believe that the action was triggered by President Karzai's nomination of Abdul Jabbar Sabit (a Pashtun) as Attorney General. According to the Parliamentarians, they had had long discussions with Karzai for many months over the lack of ethnic Uzbeks at top government levels, and Karzai had promised them repeatedly that he would name an Uzbek to the Attorney General position. At the last moment, he nominated Sabit instead of any of the names he had been given by the Uzbek delegations of MPs and elders with whom he had discussed the issue. When they demanded to know why he had broken his word, Karzai allegedly claimed that he had been pressured by the U.S. Embassy to do so. This issue was initially raised by the MPs to Poloff in front of three cabinet Ministers on 11 August, and the Ambassador addressed it at length in the second meeting on 12 August. In his response to the MPs, the Ambassador outlined the role of the international community in helping find and select candidates for top civil, military and police positions in the Afghan government, and described his own role in expressing opinions to the President. He noted, however, that the final decision in all such cases was in the hands of President Karzai, and said it was the Parliament's responsibility to confirm Sabit and other appointees

KABUL 00003608 003 OF 005

if they were found suitable. The Ambassador said no Uzbeks were among the finalists on whom President Karzai had asked for opinions. He added that he hoped whomever the Wolesi Jirga eventually confirmed would be a strong and capable candidate, and that he should be judged by his accomplishments in office rather than on the basis of his ethnic affiliation.

Comment

19. (C) We will continue to urge all parties to work inside Parliament to find compromises. We will not inject ourselves into the details as what is, and what isn't an appropriate government balance that would satisfy all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups is almost unanswerable, and no conceivable answer would ever fully satisfy the demands and perceptions of all the groups. The MPs at the two meetings conveniently forgot that the newly confirmed Minister of Women's Affairs is an ethnic Uzbek, for example. In the immediate case, however, there is a strong basis for the Uzbek feeling of disenfranchisement from the Karzai administration. The President's estrangement from Uzbek leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum is well known, and whether or not they support Dostum in private (and some do not), the Uzbeks will be forced to support him in public. In addition to President Karzai's reneging on his promises to the Uzbek MPs and delegations in the case of the Attorney General position, the Minister of Interior has just called for the dissolution of two Uzbek political parties, Hezb-e-Jonbesh-e-Milli (headed by General Abdul Rashid Dostum) and Hezb-e-Azadi-e-Afghanistan, headed by General Abdul Malik). Demonstrations may take place as a result in Faryab, Jawzjan and Takhar Provinces to protest the MOI declaration.

110. (C) In more general terms, however, Karzai is sadly enhancing his reputation as a leader whose word cannot be believed by people whose support he needs. His penchant for promising the same position to multiple office-seekers is well known (and we have seen this in our own discussions). Whether through indecisiveness or an inability to speak plainly to delegations and job applicants, he has a built up a coterie of prominent Afghans who do not trust him to

keep his word. He has now added a significant number of MPs from the north who openly discuss this presidential character flaw. End Comment.

¶11. (U) Following is text of the letter presented to the Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga:

Begin Text

In the name of God, the Most Merciful and the Most Beneficent

Your Excellency, Speaker of Respectable Elected Representatives of the Nation

Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country like other countries. Afghanistan and its national sovereignty belongs to its nation, and the Afghan nation consists of Pashtun, Tajik, Turk, Uzbek, Turkoman, Aymaq, Qirghiz, Qizilbash, Tatar, Hazara, Baluch, Pashaie, Nooristani, Arab, Gowjrbrahawi and other tribes. These groups have lived together through the existence of

KABUL 00003608 004 OF 005

our country throughout its history. They have done their part and have contributed a lot to the enrichment of our culture, social and economic development. They have defended the independence and dignity of Afghanistan and have stood firm side by side in the resistance battlefield.

The Afghan people have been waiting to see their political participation according to international standards in all the government branches (Executive, Judicial and Parliament), especially in key government positions, ever since the Bonn Conference, the creation of the Interim Transitional Administration and presidential elections under the leadership of Hamed Karzai.

The implementation of exclusive policy, dictatorship, running things independently and imposing politics have changed the people's desires to disappointment, and has created distrust towards the honesty and commitment of the government to the nation and the international community. The fair contribution of ethnic groups, in all phases of the government, has decreased, and the way to implement and create a "tribal policy" has increased and the government is using its financial and economic resources in this regard.

This is happening while a large number of developed countries have a presence in Afghanistan, defend democracy, social justice and national participation, and try to implement them, but our government tries to demonstrate and describe its own improper policies as if it is the decision of the international community.

The elected representatives of the people, elders and scholars met with His Excellency the President and repeated their concerns regarding this issue. The response of Mr. Hamed Karzai has always been that he realizes their concerns, and in order to strengthen national confidence he would take serious measures to resolve these concerns.

But unfortunately our people are witness that the rights and privileges of the armed forces are not given to them, and the reprehensible policies regarding appointments, unsuccessful reforms within the ministries, appointments of cadres in and out of the country are witness to our claims. These facts create a feeling that the government is following policies to sideline particular ethnic groups in the country.

We, a number of elected representatives of the people, realizing our responsibilities towards our nation and to defend their deserved rights, decided to walk out of Parliament to show our objections towards the improper policies of the government, and until future decisions are made, we will not attend any sessions of the National Assembly and we seriously want the government to put practical steps forward to resolve the existing concerns of the people.

Elected Representatives of the people, and proud people of Afghanistan!

Through the political life of Afghanistan's Parliament, the position of the elected representatives of the people regarding all the

KABUL 00003608 005 OF 005

events, political and social developments has been based on the people's decision, and we call this the "Afghan Nation". The members of the Wolesi Jirga have always preferred the national benefit rather than tribal, ethnic and party benefits, and their acts and dedication can be a good model for the government's activities.

End Text
NEUMANN